

For Immediate Release: Thursday, January 14, 2010

Contact: Oversight and Government Reform Press Office, (202) 225-5051

## **House Passes Legislation to Expand GAO Litigation Authority**

Washington, DC – The House of Representatives passed H.R. 2646, the “Government Accountability Office Improvement Act of 2009” yesterday, a bill that will increase the capability of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to fulfill its mission by providing the agency with greater authority to access government records. The bill, sponsored by House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-NY), received broad bipartisan support and passed the House by voice vote.

“The Congress sent a powerful message by passing this important good government legislation on the first day of the new legislative session,” said Chairman Towns. “The House of Representatives is committed to strong and effective oversight of government programs so the American people have confidence the workings of their government.”

The GAO Improvement Act of 2009 also explicitly provides the Comptroller General with the ability to pursue litigation when and if there is reason to believe that an agency is improperly withholding important information from the Government Accountability Office. On June 4, 2009, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform reported the legislation out of committee by voice vote.

H.R. 2646 directly addresses the court decision in *Walker v. Cheney* which limited GAO’s ability to question agency access to decisions in court. In addition, the bill clarifies GAO’s authority to administer oaths, an important tool in conducting audits and taking statements.

Congress relies heavily on the GAO to help execute the investigative and oversight functions vested in the Legislative Branch. GAO audits provide reliable assessments as to whether the taxpayers are receiving full value from important government programs.

“A strong GAO helps Congress carry out our oversight responsibilities. I am hopeful the Senate

will recognize the merits of this good government legislation and act on it quickly,” added Chairman Towns.

###